THE PEOPLE’S
DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF
YEMEN

Jumhuriyah al-Yemen
al Dimuqratiyah
al Sha’abiyah—
Southern Yemen

HISTORY. Between Aug. and Oct. 1967 the 17 sultanates of the Federation of South Arabia (see map in The Statesman’s Year-Book, 1965–66) were overrun by the forces of the National Liberation Front (NLF). The rulers were deposed, resigned or fled. At the same time the rival organization of FLOSY (Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen) fought a civil war against NLF and harassed the British forces and civilians in Aden. In Nov. the UAR withdrew its support from FLOSY, and with the backing of the Army the NLF took over throughout the country.

The last British troops left Aden on 29 Nov. 1967, and on 30 Nov. the Southern Yemen People’s Republic was proclaimed and the name was subsequently changed to the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen in 1970.

On 13 Jan. 1986 there was a coup attempt against President Ali Nasser Mohammed which developed into virtual civil war. By 24 Jan. the rebel forces had taken control of the capital, Aden, and at a meeting of the Socialist Party Central Committee the presidium of the Supreme People’s Council announced that the Acting President was Haydar al-Attas.

In May 1988, agreements were signed in Taiz between Ali Salem Al-Beedh, Secretary General of the Yemeni Socialist Party and President Saleh of the Yemen Arab Republic. The agreements covered joint oil exploration of a demilitarized border zone and more open borders. In Dec. 1989 agreement was reached with the Yemen Arab Republic on a draft Constitution for a unified state.

AREA AND POPULATION. The People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen is bounded north by the Yemen Arab Republic and Saudi Arabia, east by Oman, south by the Gulf of Aden and west by the Yemen Arab Republic and Bab Al-Mandab Strait. The Republic covers an area of approximately 130,065 sq. miles (336,869 sq. km). Land area can be divided into 4 areas: (i) the coastal lands in the south, nearly 1,200 km long and 12-25 km wide; (ii) the inner lands and plateaus; (iii) the northern desert to the north of Hadhramaut; (iv) the green valleys scattered between the high lands. Population (census, preliminary 1988) 2,345,266; urban, 33%; rural, 57% and nomads, 10%. The main towns are (1987) Aden (capital) (population, 417,366), and Mukalla (154,360).

The island of Kamaran in the Red Sea (area 181 sq. km) was in British occupation from 1915 to 1967, when the inhabitants opted in favour of remaining with the Republic but Yemen Arab Republic occupied it in 1972.

The island of Perim (300 sq. km) was first occupied by the French in 1738. In 1799 the British took formal possession but evacuated the island the same year. It was re-occupied by the British in Jan. 1851 and was later used as a coaling station. In Nov. 1967 the inhabitants opted in favour of remaining with the Republic.
The island of Socotra lying to the east of the Horn of Africa in the Arabian sea (area 3,500 sq. km) was formerly part of the Sultanate of Qishn and Socotra and became part of the Republic in 1967.

CLIMATE. A desert climate prevails, modified in parts by altitude, which affects temperatures by up to 12°C, as well as rainfall, which is very low in coastal areas. Aden, Jan. 75°F (24°C), July 90°F (32°C). Annual rainfall 1-8" (46 mm).

CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT

An amended Constitution was approved by the Supreme People’s Council on 31 Oct. 1978.

The cabinet in Nov. 1989 was composed as follows:
Vice-President: Dr Muhammad Awad al-Sa’adi.

National flag. Three horizontal stripes of red, white, black, with a blue triangle based on the hoist bearing a red star.

Local Government. There are 6 governorates (Aden, Lahej, Abyan, Shabwa, Hadhramaut and Al-Mahra), sub-divided into 30 provinces.

DEFENCE. Military service for 2 years is compulsory.

Army. The Army comprises 1 armoured, 3 mechanized, 9 infantry, 3 artillery, 2 rocket and 2 surface-to-surface missile brigades and 10 artillery battalions. Equipment includes 480 T-34/-54/-55/-62 main battle tanks. Strength (1990) about 24,000.

Navy. The Navy comprises 6 fast missile craft, 2 fast torpedo-boats, 2 fast attack craft, 1 tank landing ship, 4 medium landing ships and 5 minor landing craft, all transferred from the Soviet Navy and 5 boats. There is also a Soviet repair ship based in Aden, and a 4,500 tonne capacity floating dock, but they are principally used by the Soviet Navy and ownership is unclear. Personnel in 1989 totalled 1,000.

Air Force. Formed in 1967, the Air Force is now equipped mainly with aircraft of Soviet design. It has received about 40 MiG-21 fighters, 30 MiG-17 and 25 MiG-23 fighter-bombers, 30 Su-22 attack aircraft, 15 Mi-24 gunship helicopters, 4 An-24 and 2 An-26 twin-turboprop transports and about 30 Mi-8 and 5 Mi-4 helicopters. Personnel (1990) about 2,500.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Membership. The People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen is a member of UN and the Arab League.

ECONOMY

Planning. The development plan (1986–91) envisaged expenditure of 998·2m. dinars.

Budget. The budget (in 1m. Yemeni dinars) for 1989 envisaged general revenue at 354·3 and general expenditure at 471·5.

Currency. The currency is the South Yemen dinar and is divided into 1,000 fils. Coins: 50, 25, 5 fils; notes: 10, 5 and 1 dinar, 500 and 250 fils. In March 1990, £1 = 0·559 dinars; US$1 = 0·339 dinars.

Banking. The only commercial bank is the National Bank of Yemen with the Bank of Yemen carrying on the functions of the Central Bank. All foreign banks have been nationalized.